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# Watching Charles Vickery Paint the Christian Radich

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## WATCHING CHARLES VICKERY PAINT THE *CHRISTIAN RADICH*

*"Charles Vickery is America's foremost marine artist." Chicago Tribune*

First a lightning sketch of the vessel's outline  
Smeared on canvas (minus its own great sheeting)  
Bare and white, the tooth of the surface waiting,  
Woven threads athirst for the promised ocean.

Square-rigged sails appear on the masts; they billow.  
Ships like this reach tall in their quest for breezes.  
Clouds collect, exciting the sky, the sailors.  
Many recognize the potential weather.

Blues and grays predominate north's horizon.  
Next the water covers the foreground deeply.  
Light and shadows hurry to take their stations  
Fore and aft. The captain completes the picture.

Restless noisy sea, its devious rhythms  
Twisting out of synchrony, yawing, ceaseless.  
Hear the combers drowning the artist's brushes,  
Leading us from shore in a wake of colors.

All on watch have now gone aboard the *Radich*:  
Painter's whim no more but a clipper straining  
Every beam, her bowsprit aimed high then dipping  
Down to taste the spume in the troughs before her.

Hull a rocking coulter, determined, thrumming,  
Riding bias walls with their breaking turrets,  
Blue and green and aquamarine with foam-fringe  
Washing her, and hands at the rails with salt-sting.

Stowaways, we cling to adventure's rigging:  
Through the hour vicarious voyagers linger,  
Hear the creaking bulkheads and wind-strummed ratlines,  
Smell the tar, the sweat of a proud tradition.

Putting down his palette and smiling slightly,  
Charles begins to cap all his tubes of pigment,  
Signs the work, surrenders it up for auction.  
Losers watch it heave out of sight — a memory.

*Mr. Vickery died in September, 1998*

— Glenna Holloway